

Depot Town Rag

Volume 24, Number 2

March/April
2009

100%
FREE
RAG
CONTENT

MORE
STUFF!

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

What's up with the *THE* anyway?

Headline writers avoid using *THE*. It's a klunker that stops readers right when they want to get started. Not all copy writers agree with this stance. Hammacher/Schlemmer's expensive gadget catalog lists each item with "the" in its description as if it were the definitive example, i.e.: "*The* Left-Handed Back Massager."

Others don't want to be lumped in and hope to clear up which one they are: *The* Home Depot, *The* Charter Township of Ypsilanti, *The* Health and Fitness Center at Washtenaw Community College. WCC even uses "THFC" in their gym's newsletter. Can we now look for "TUMs" on sweatshirts from *The* University of Michigan?

Some places are so cool they don't need a definite article designation for this blunt adjective. The following comparisons may help the uninitiated to differentiate:

Somerset Collection

Not The Somerset Collection (TSC)



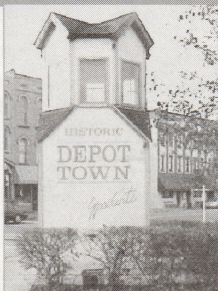
Use this handy guide when shopping and do not be fooled by imitations:

Left: Central focus of Somerset Collection

Right: Central focus of Ypsi's Depot Town

Depot Town

Not The Depot Town District (TDTD)



Generic feature category

Classy shopping mall in Troy

What's collected in their collections

Designer clothing, jewelry, perfumes, luggage

Customer-friendly symbols

Glass-enclosed moving walkway—and that's about it

Historical character

Close to Colonial Birmingham

What they say about themselves/folklore

"A timeless elegance that is both warm and inviting. The architecture provides an intimacy and comfort level for the guest that continues to enhance the sophisticated and prestigious reputation..." (From Website)

Typical commercial offerings

Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Ralph Lauren, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Cole Haan, Barneys New York Co-Op, Tiffany & Co., Burberry.

Railroad district in Ypsilanti

What's collected in their collections

Old cars, fire engines, bars, funky shops, barbers, parks

Customer-friendly symbols

Open-air railroad & river
Wooden crossing guard tower

Historical character

Three local history museums

What they say about themselves/folklore

People seem to like it even though it's terribly old fashioned. "Down between the river and the railroad tracks."

(From a song they wrote about themselves in an embarrassing fit of self-promotion about forty years ago)

Typical commercial offerings

Flower, antique, rock, coin, computer, bump, and barber shops, farmers' market, restaurants, food co-op, computer store, and other cool stuff appearing in this issue.

WE COLLECT STUFF



Ypsi's Auto Museum & Historical Museum, Michigan Firehouse Museum, and comedian Janeane Garofalo pretending to read *The Rag*



Depot Town is a collection of acquisitive people who collect stuff. All kinds of stuff. We have whole buildings full of stuff. It seems we're always taking up a collection

Recycling notwithstanding, some people just can't stand to throw anything away. If they have one, two is better. And a hundred or more of the same thing is the very best; it's a collection.

People collect just about anything and, as we have proven in this old railroad district, they often come down here to find stuff, show off their stuff, and trade for new stuff. We like the old stuff mostly: old cars, trucks, and fire engines; old clothes and old books, too.

We collect little stuff like toys and thimbles. Jim MacDonald's dad was known across the country for his collection of antique toothpick holders. Folks come in to Olde Towne Coin & Gold looking for old coins, and former mayor Mike Homel collects teeny-tiny postage stamps. WEMU's Linda Yohn collects toasters—those chrome bread-cooking things we use every morning. Phil Barnes recently gave away his 50-year collection of *Sports Illustrated* magazines.

We collect big stuff too—like fire trucks, railroad cars, and buildings. Old car collectors bring their machines to this block all summer long just so they can see what other collectors are up to.

Then there's that collection of giant World War Two fighting planes out at the Yankee Air Museum at Willow Run Airport; that's one Really Big Collection. Over on Forest Avenue, RM Auctions reconditions classic automobiles for serious (wealthy) collectors around the world.

Just about everybody knows about the Big Museum Collections in this neighborhood where we always bring out-of-town visitors. They are featured at greater length in this issue.

And there are some folks in the neighborhood who actually collect monthly issues of this little newsletter. Steve Gross claims to have a copy of every issue as far back as 1976. Go figure.

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum & Miller Motors Hudson

This unique museum of hometown pride is funded entirely by private contributions and is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization



100 East Cross Street
734.482.5200

www.ypsiautoheritage.org

Part of the MotorCities-automobile National Heritage Area www.motorcities.org

**The Auto Museum is the site of the
"World's Last Hudson Dealership"**



The old Hudson showroom provides one of the best views of the neighborhood at the depot



Ypsilanti's considerable contribution to the American automobile industry is featured here

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1:30-5pm
Sat 10am-5pm
Sun. noon-5pm

www.ypsiautoheritage.org

(734) 482-5200

Admission
Adults \$3
Children under 12
accompanied by an adult free
Ypsilanti, MI 48198

A unique automotive history is showcased in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town

- ✓ Apex Motors' "ACE" car from 1920-1922
- ✓ Preston Tucker developed and built the prototype for his "Tucker Torpedo" after World War II
- ✓ Henry J. Kaiser and Joseph W. Frazer produced Kaiser and Frazer autos from 1947-1953
- ✓ GM's Powertrain Division (formerly Hydramatic) produced automatic transmissions in 1953
- ✓ Chevrolet produced large special order trucks here in 1956, Corvairs from 1959-1969, the Nova, Ventura, Omega, Skylark series of GM cars and, in 1980, production shifted to the GM X-series front-wheel drive cars
- ✓ Ypsi's Willow Run plant produced Chevrolet Caprice, Buick and Oldsmobile sedans and station wagons until 1993

Ypsilanti Auto Museum Events:

May 2 & 3

**Ypsi Area Street Rod
Car Show and Swap Meet**

June 4 and every Thursday night
through September
Cruise Nights

June 7

Orphan Car Show

July 3, 4, 5

Michigan Camaro Superfest

October 3

Antique Truck Show

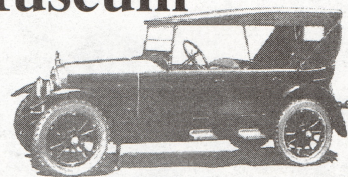
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Ypsi's ACE

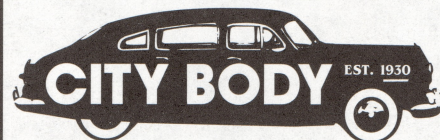
Other exhibits commemorate Ypsilanti's production of:

- ✓ Ford Generators
- ✓ Motor State Products' convertible tops and hydraulic window assemblies
- ✓ Jim Robbins Seat Belt Company
- ✓ King-Seely's Central Specialty Division foundry
- ✓ Gar-Wood/United Metal Craft's (Norris Industries) wire wheel hubcaps
- ✓ Motor Wheel Corporation/Central Specialty's brake drums and disc brake rotors in 1964



The recently expanded balcony showcases even more fascinating Hudson memorabilia [Inset] A billy club (at right) made from a chair leg for Hudson's 1937 sit-down strike

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Michigan Firehouse Museum



110 West Cross Street

Tuesday-Saturday 10-4

Sunday 12-4

Closed Monday

734.547.0663

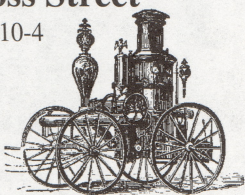
Admission:

Adults \$3

Firefighters/Seniors/Students \$2

6-15 years \$1.50, Under 6 free

Group rates available



Built in 1898 in the Romanesque Revival style, Ypsi's old firehouse was in active use as a fire station until 1975. Today it offers visitors a glimpse of life in a firehouse circa 1900 complete with horse-drawn vehicles and an original brass pole.

The new 12,000 square foot addition houses a changing exhibition of fire fighting vehicles and equipment.

✓ The Firehouse Museum has an extensive collection of hand, horse, and engine-propelled fire apparatus, plus fire extinguishers, emblems, hats, helmets, matches, ladders, breathing gear, clothing, nozzles, photographs, and fire truck bells.

✓ For the toy enthusiast, there is a large collection of vintage model fire trucks, along with other firehouse related items and memorabilia.

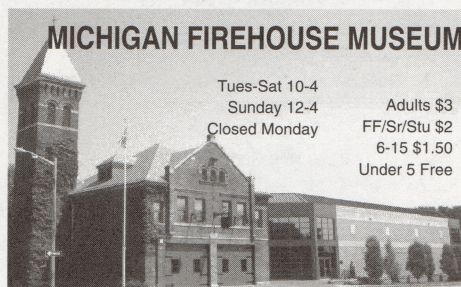
✓ The Museum is active in many community and firefighting related events throughout the year, including fire safety promotion for children and hosting its own Fire Truck Muster in Riverside Park each summer.

✓ The Museum also has select areas available for rental, offering a unique setting for hosting special events. From parties to receptions. For more information, call 734.547.0663.



Ypsilanti's Firehouse commands a stately presence at the west end of Depot Town where it was built to placate east- and west-side factions who quarreled over fire protection in 1898. Now that the City is totally united, the facility is a unique repository of firefighting memorabilia.

Join the thousands who visit the Michigan Firehouse Museum every year
...for those who appreciate firefighters, fire history, and fire safety



MICHIGAN FIREHOUSE MUSEUM

Tues-Sat 10-4

Sunday 12-4

Closed Monday

Adults \$3

FF/Sr/Stu \$2

6-15 \$1.50

Under 5 Free



Firehouse Events

Saturday, March 28, 7 & 9:30 p.m.

Comedy Jam 2

Sunday, April 26

Antique Vehicle Restoration Workshop at the Museum

July 25 Great Lakes Region Chapters
Antique Fire Truck Muster
Frankenmuth, MI

Saturday, August 29
Antique Fire Truck Muster
Riverside Park



GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

SAT., MARCH 28, 2009
SHOWS AT 7 PM & 9:30 PM



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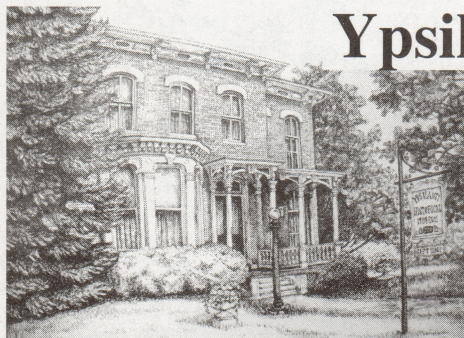
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Deborah Vetter's 2006 drawing of the Museum is available for \$27.50 (color) or \$19.50 (b&w)

Museum hours:

Tues-Sun 2-5 p.m.
734-482-4990

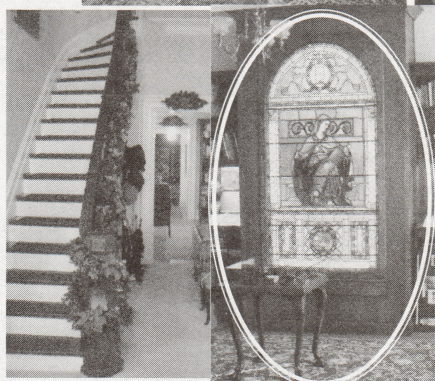
Fletcher-White Archives

Mon-Sun 2-5 p.m.
734.572.0437

Asa Dow's elaborate 1860 Italian Villa style mansion has been Ypsilanti's house museum since 1970. The Ypsilanti Historical Society initiated a five-year campaign to raise \$400,000 to cover the cost of purchasing the building from the City and to complete many deferred maintenance projects. See "A Matter of Trust" a Power Point presentation at www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org.

Main floor:

A grand stair and center hall connect the many rooms in Ypsilanti's house museum, the Tiffany window in the library, family parlor, formal parlor at Christmas



In the back:

The kitchen often smells of gingerbread, displays of local lore in the Ypsilanti Room

Underneath it all:
The Fletcher-White Archives and a new meeting room seats up to 35 in a classroom setting.



Upstairs: A front bedroom is dedicated to sewing skills, kids' toys cover the floor of the former maid's room



Ypsilanti Historical Museum Events:

April 5-19
Art Exhibit

July 19-August 30
Lost Ypsilanti Exhibit

September 27- October 11
Quilt Show

December 6
Christmas Open House

Ypsilanti Historical Society Museum and Archives (free admission)



Hours: 2:00 to 5:00 pm
Tuesday thru Sunday

220 North Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org

Museum: 734-482-4990

Archives: 734-217-8236

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Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"

A monthly publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc.

The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

To the editor: thomasdodd@comcast.net

The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrill Guerra, Vice President
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Website: www.depottown.org

DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

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Our collections are as unique as their collectors



Rene and Matt Greff's Corner Brewery hides unique collections waaaay up above the bricks over the windows: hundreds of snowglobes and—on the other side—beer cans from around the world



Collection of collections



A recent Ypsilanti home tour featured a local couple who added on to their west side home just to house their colossal collection of collectibles from around the world. Their cleaning lady says the family dog got lost in there a few months ago but they can hear him barking periodically, so they leave food and water out for him, hoping he'll find his way out.

Condensed from "25 Strangest Collections..."

Actual museum-quality collections include the following—and much more:

- Graham Barker's Navel Fluff
- Air Sickness Bag Virtual Museum
- Bob Toelle's Fish Posters
- Barney Smith's Toilet Seat Art
- Sergei Frolov's Soviet Calculators
- Phil Miller's Presidential Sugar Packs
- Michael Lewis' Moist Towelettes
- Museum of Burnt Food
- Weird Fortune Cookie Collection



See Pat Pringle and Dennis Runyon's drum collection at Dennis' Music



Dervin Mood with a small portion of his plush toy pig collection



City Body's Bruce Sobbry (left) builds and flies model planes around the country. 2006 photo from the Joe Nall Fly-In at Greenville, SC.



Writer Laura Bein collects telephones and copper utensils



Amanda Bordine, baker at Queen of Hearts, has the largest rubber band ball

Pioneer Collector and Clubwoman Extraordinaire

Source: Highland Cemetery archives

Florence Babbitt (1847-1929) was one of Ypsilanti's most notable collectors. Acquiring antiques began as a small hobby for Mrs. Babbitt, but after her husband's death in 1901, collecting became her vocation and business. Considered an authority on antique pottery, fine porcelains, glassware, and old English and American silver, her collections were enormous. At one time she



Florence Babbitt in 1920 in an 1880s dress. Inset: The same dress in the Ypsilanti Historical Museum exhibit

had in her possession "3,000 pieces of old china, 1,500 trays, a bushel basket full of glass cup plates, furniture, silver, brasses, pewter, lamps, colonial coverlets, samplers, etc." She consulted with Henry Ford on the collections for the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, and items from her collection are there. In 1901, she gave the Michigan State Normal College (EMU) a collection of "pioneer relics" from the first half of the 19th century.

The Sidetrack's famous Gustav Stickley doors! Who knew?

French women share their rare doors with a priceless clientele



Thousands have rushed through the bathroom doors at Linda and Jessica French's popular Sidetrack Bar & Grill, but how many have ever stopped to appreciate the rare and genuine Gustav Stickley doors that lend such dignity to their elimination processes? 'Pickers' had rescued these unique doors from a swank Indian Village home in Detroit years ago when Linda was in the antique business (Depot Exchange Antiques). The Stickley doors have been drooled over by Arts & Crafts Style afficianadoes ever since and are declared "priceless" by experts in the business of antiquities.

Collectors are coming
Shoppers from Redondo Beach, CA converge here March 3-6 for their "Shop 'Til You Drop" event. They'll stay in Livonia, but head here each day to play.

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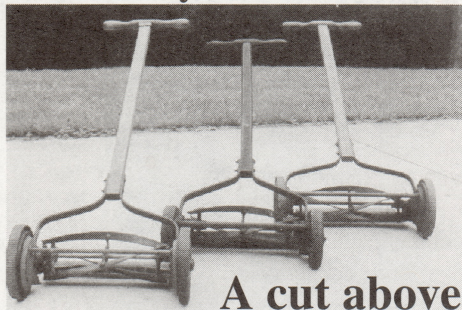
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Reel history on River Street



A cut above

Brent Jurrjens of River Street didn't think his interest in early reel-type lawn mowers was particularly unusual since just about everyone restores cars but, he says, "Who's restoring the lawnmowers of yesteryear?" Jurrjens' models are not the "conventional heavy, noisy gas engine-powered rotary mowers people use today. "Everything in my collection came from junk shops and flea markets," says Jurrjens:

- An American Lawn Mower Company reel mower with a 16" cut.
- Two completely functional child-sized Dille & McGuire reel mowers w/ 8" cut..
- A Blair reel mower with a 16" cut that looks like an average '30s -'40s vintage wood-handled reel mower but with cast aluminum wheels and frame.
- A modern 16" cut Agri-Fab Silent Reel mower—a typical contemporary reel mower made with steel tube and stampings with plastic wheels."

"Gas powered rotary mowers," he contends, "didn't really become commonplace until the 1960s. Reel mowers—if they're kept sharp and tuned up—will make a much cleaner cut."

Cady's Grill evolves

At the January closing of Cady's, Sandee and Bill French announced, "The reality of Michigan's economy has forced us to re-evaluate our restaurant's direction. Customers are moving away from restaurants with high price points and in the future 'value restaurants' will become the choice of more and more diners."

Look for French's upbeat barbeque restaurant at 36 East Cross Street under the direction of general manager Bob Roberts after a month or two of remodeling.

GRAND OPENING

Saturday, April 25, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market
Depot Town

New location on the Market Plaza in front of the Freighthouse
• Children's Activities Area
• Entertainment
• Vendors of Many Types

Special Guest Appearance
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Officer Tony Schembri and K-9 Officer "Buky" from Ypsilanti Police Dept



RAGTIME

Coming soon

Street Festivals
Car Shows
Concerts
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Kids' Stuff
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Annual
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Let's play dress-up Renowned costume collection at home in the Follett House



Brennan adjusts a tutu near the corner windows of the Territory's "only safe" bank

Bill Brennan brought the famed Fantasy Attic costume collection to Depot Town just in time for his promised January opening. "We've moved all the stock from the former location," says Brennan and many of the district's faithful attest to the appropriateness of this action, since this is where people love to dress up and act out their fantasies.

Last fall, Brennan told the *A2 News* he "gave up on the strip malls and downtown Ann Arbor," when he discovered this three-bay commercial space available at 19 East Cross Street.

Fantasy Attic's costume collection now rests comfortably in the offices of what in 1834 was described as "the only safe bank in the Michigan Territory," the historic Follett House hotel.

Rental Manager Wendy Wagner-Satwicz has hundreds of costumes, masks, and accessories displayed and ready for a loyal clientele who like to play dress-up.

Like the old song says, "Dance and dress just like a gypsy—in this charming part of Ypsi." Look for more color than ever as Fantasy Attic's clients catch the spirit of this old neighborhood.



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